

SPEAKING TESTS USED BY EFL TEACHERS IN KEFAMENANU

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Received: May 24, 2023

Published: February 13, 2024

Abstract: Speaking, from the point of view of educational evaluation is considered special because it is interactive and must be measured through direct interaction. This study focuses on the types of speaking tests used by EFL teachers and the challenges faced by EFL teachers in constructing and administering the test. Two EFL teachers from two schools located in Kefamenanu were the subjects of the study. The descriptive qualitative method was employed in conducting this study. The instruments used were the documentation of speaking tests and interviews. Later, the data were analyzed qualitatively. The research results revealed that there were nine types of speaking tests used by the teachers namely oral presentations, free interviews, information transfer questions on a single picture, role play, paraphrasing, giving instructions and directions, conversation, and translation. The challenges faced by the teachers in assessing students' speaking skills were insufficient time to prepare for the test, the short time to test all students, and no test training provided for the teachers.

Keywords: *analysis, EFL Teachers, qualitative, speaking skill, speaking test*

How to Cite: Semiun, T. T., Wisrance, M. W., & Soleman, J. K. (2023). Speaking tests used by EFL teachers in kefamenanu. *Journal of English Literacy and Education*, 10(2), 137-146. <http://dx.doi.org/10.36706/jele.v10i2.21351>

INTRODUCTION

English speaking skills can be measured through standardized tests such as the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) or English as a Second Language Oral Assessment (ESLOA) and authentic assessments such as portfolio sheets, analysis of recorded speech samples, or classroom interactions (O'Malley and Pierce, 1990; Vladi, 2015). O'Malley and Pierce (1996) argue that the assessment instrument should reflect the material that has been written in the lesson plan and what has been taught. For example, if the learning objective focuses on generating and recognizing signals for a turn in group discussions, the scoring criteria should be clearly defined and understandable to both the teacher and the students. Assessment tools or tests can be in the form of checklists that must be filled out by the teacher or student during the discussion.

In educational evaluation, authentic assessment has been implemented in the teaching and learning process of English classrooms (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2019).

Authentic assessment is a form of assessment that requires students to display or demonstrate their skills. Authentic assessment can directly measure learning based on student performance. According to Flojo (2013), students are allowed to show what they have learned through performances, exhibitions, or demonstrations. Through authentic assessment, students are required to demonstrate their English-speaking skills by applying what they have learned, for instance, grammar and vocabulary (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2019).

The assessment of students' speaking skills is considered difficult to measure because of its abstract nature, varied assessment subjects, and a more time-consuming scoring process when compared to the reading skills (Ludenberg in Isaacs, 2016). According to Shim (in Genc *et al.*, 2020), teachers have problems in conducting speaking assessments because they cannot control the assessment process in large classes with many students. Not many teachers use authentic assessments in classrooms (Madani, 2019). This kind of test takes a lot of time because the test has to assess each student's performance. Teachers usually only focus on active students and ignore passive students. According to Zaim and Arsyad (2020), teachers lack of knowledge to authentically assess language skills because they are used to the pencil and paper test method. The pencil and paper test method can be used to assess grammar, reading skills, and listening skills, but it is not suitable for assessing productive skills. Fahmi *et al.*, (2020) point out that "most Indonesian students still assume that English is a difficult language to learn". Students think English is a cool but stressful subject. It is cool if they can speak English, but it is stressful if they have to speak in front of their classes. Students find it difficult to speak English in class or when invited to communicate outside the classroom because they lack of vocabulary. In learning language, anxiety affects students' language learning achievement. According to Al-Khotaba *et al.* (2019) "the EFL learners with high language anxiety have less achievement in speaking test while EFL learners with low language speaking anxiety have high achievement in speaking test".

Several tests can be used in measuring students' speaking skills. Weir (1990) proposes several tests which are considered as useful and potentially valid formats of speaking ability. The tests are verbal essay, oral presentation, free interview, control interview, information transfer: description of a picture sequence, information transfer: questions on a single picture, interaction task, and role play. Brown (2004) offers basic types of speaking which are imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive and extensive (monolog).

In oral presentation, teachers give a topic and then asks students to provide a brief description of the topic. The free interview is done by posing questions to students according to the topic. The interview questions are conducted to check students' basic understanding of the material being studied. The questions given in this type of assessment are free and in principle the same as referential and display questions as proposed by Gebhard (2000). Information transfer questions on a single picture is a type of speaking test which teachers show a picture and assign students to discuss the picture. This form of test is used when the teachers test students' ability to describe people, objects, or places. The last is role play where students are assigned mostly in pair to memorize a dialogue from the textbook and act in front of the class.

Imitative is a form of assessment where teachers ask students to repeat or imitate words or phrases after being spoken by the teachers. This assessment is devoted to measuring students' pronunciation skill. Usually, this assessment is conveyed by the

teachers at each meeting with different topics. Paraphrasing and giving instructions and directions are part of the responsive assessment. Responsive assessment includes interaction and understanding of a topic at a more limited level (Brown, 2004). An example of a paraphrasing assessment is when students listen to a short story and respond to the story in two or three sentences. In the conversation test, students are asked to write short conversations and then practice it. This type of test is usually used to measure students' speaking skills in transactional and interpersonal conversations, for example, expressions to show appreciation. The form of translation assessment on the other hand requires students to read words or sentences in English and then translate them into Indonesian or vice versa. Conversation and translation assessments are examples of interactive tests that are more difficult than imitative or responsive tests.

The assessment of students' achievement can be grouped into formative tests and summative tests. Formative assessment evaluates students during teaching and learning process and takes place in the process of forming competence and English skills while summative assessment on the other hand is conducted at the end of the lesson aimed at measuring or inferring students' understanding of the material that has been studied (Brown, 2004). Furthermore, Djiwando (2010) states that the evaluation of language skills is associated with the level of success of the learning that has been implemented. This evaluation of success is portrayed in the form of grades obtained by students at the end of the lesson.

The importance of evaluation for assigning students' grades needs teachers to construct good tests. Since students are taught four skills i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing, it is necessary for the teacher to test all skills. A great amount of literature has explained evaluations of reading or writing. On the contrary, there are few studies that depict evaluations of listening or speaking skill. This study focuses on types of speaking tests used by the EFL teachers to measure students' achievement. The research was conducted at two different schools in Kefamenanu, Timor Tengah Utara regency. Through this research, types of speaking tests used by the teachers are described and challenges faced by them in constructing and administering tests are revealed. Later, the results of this research can be used as information for institutions to solve the problems.

METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive qualitative research. It is designed to describe the assessment of speaking skills and investigate the views of English teachers about the challenges to assess speaking skills. Two EFL teachers who teach at two different schools located in Kefamenanu, Timor Tengah Utara regency were the subjects of the study. The EFL teachers have been teaching English less than seven years. The instruments used to collect the data were documentation of speaking tests, observations, and interviews.

The data were collected following this procedure. First, the EFL teachers were asked to collect or show speaking tests that they used to test the students. Next, they were observed two times in the classroom to see whether they really tested students' speaking skill or not. Last, they were interviewed about challenges or problems that appeared in testing speaking skill. The interviews were semi-structure and conducted in Indonesian (See Table 1). The documentation and observation were conducted to gain the data about type of speaking tests used by the EFL teachers. While, interview

was conducted to obtain the data regarding challenges or problems experienced by the EFL teachers in constructing or administering the tests.

After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed it qualitatively. The speaking skill test document was analyzed based on the speaking tests format proposed by Weir (1990) and Brown (2004). There are thirteen types of speaking tests used as references which are verbal essay, oral presentation, free interview, control interview, information transfer: description of a picture sequence, information transfer: questions on a single picture, interaction task, role play, imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive and extensive (monolog). And, data from interviews were described as they are.

Table 1. Interview guide

Variables	Indicators	Questions
How speaking is measured	1. The management of the test	How long does it take to conduct this speaking assessment?
		How long did it take to assess one student?
		Were the students tested in groups (2 to 4 students) at once?
	2. The cost	Was there any test booklet?
		Did the school print the booklet?
		Was the cost of the test the total responsibility of the school?
	3. The test construction	Were the test items constructed based on the Standard Competence or Basic Competence of School-Based Curriculum
Practicality	1. The time constraints	How long does it take to prepare the test items?
		Are the examiners trained to conduct the test?
	2. The scoring	Is it easy to score the test? How is it score?
	3. The test instructions/directions	Is the instruction given in students' first or second languages? Can the examinees understand the instruction easily?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Types of Speaking Test

The assessment of speaking skills by the two English teachers was conducted through oral presentations, free interviews, information transfer questions on a single picture, role play, imitative, responsive, and interactive. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Types of speaking tests



No.	Speaking Test	Teacher A	Teacher B
1.	Oral presentations		√
2.	Free interviews	√	√
3.	Information transfer questions on a Single Picture		√
4.	Role Play	√	√
5.	Imitative	√	√
6.	Responsive	√	
7.	Interactive	√	√

The EFL teachers applied different types of speaking test. Teacher A applied 5 types of speaking test which were free interview, role play, imitative, responsive, and interactive. Meanwhile, teacher B used 6 types of speaking tests i.e. oral presentation, imitative, interactive, information transfer questions on a single picture, role play, imitative, and interactive.

Challenges in assessing speaking skill

Assessing speaking skills is a complex process that requires special consideration for teachers or lecturers (Burns, 2012). Weir (1990) suggests that the assessment of speaking skills is considered more severe than the assessment of writing skills. Furthermore, Richards and Rodgers (2001) imply that the lack of time to practice speaking in class is also an obstacle that teachers cannot avoid in the process of assessing students' speaking skills in the classroom.

The two English teachers experienced challenges in the process of assessing students' speaking in the classroom. These constraints were classified into two measurement variables, namely how speaking was measured and practical assessment variables. In the first variable, there was ineffectiveness of the implementation time of the student's speaking assessment. The current research has similar finding to Dwijayani and Musigrungsi (2022), and Al-Jarf (2021). Apparently, the short test time cannot accommodate all indicators of learning achievement and also the total number of students in the class. Meanwhile, the time required to assess one student's speaking skills in the classroom was uncertain. Therefore this assessment was sometimes done individually and sometimes in groups. The speaking skill assessment was carried out by referring to the speaking rubric which includes pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary. Scoring rubric is needed to maintain reliability of the test (Luoma in Yalçin-Çolakoglu and Selçuk, 2019). The implementation of a speaking assessment did not require any fees. Speaking assessment test booklets were not prepared either by the teacher or by the school. In addition, each test item for assessing students' speaking skills was based on the learning indicators of each meeting.

The practical variable for assessing students' English speaking skills accommodated several assessment indicators including test execution time, administrative details, scoring system, and test implementation instructions. The results of the interview revealed that there was no specific time needed to prepare for each test item. In addition, the time of the speaking test for each student only depended on the relatively short lesson hours which were only carried out once a week. The excessive use of time in scoring the students' test result was one of problems faced by test raters (Latifa *et al.*, 2015). Another challenge to the practical

variable was that the speaking skill testers were not specially trained to carry out the test. In addition, regarding the indicator of test instructions, the teacher informed that students understood the test instructions more easily when they were given in Indonesian than in English. This was certainly an obstacle that needs attention for English teachers. Learning English with Indonesian instructions is very different from the concept of the Natural Approach proposed by Terrel and Krashen which emphasizes that mother tongue should not be used in foreign language learning (Setiyadi, 2020).

Discussion

The seven types of speaking tests (oral presentations, free interviews, information transfer questions on a single picture, role play, imitative, responsive and interactive) were implemented during the teaching and learning process, and the tests were done formatively. According to Zeinep (2021), “formative assessment focuses on both learning process and learner's performance”.

When conducting the speaking tests, both EFL teachers focused on several aspects. The first aspect was pronunciation, indicating students' ability to imitate the way native speakers pronounce a word/phrase/sentence. The second aspect was fluency, which means the ability of students to speak fluently without repetition. The third aspect was accuracy, that looked at students' ability to use various forms of grammar correctly. The fourth aspect was vocabulary, that was the ability of students to use the right words in sentences, either using their own words or from a list of vocabulary that had been provided. Tajeddin *et al.* (2018) reported that both novice and experienced EFL teachers include previous mentioned aspects in assessing their students' speaking ability.

In addition to the forms of tests described previously, the EFL teachers also provided other forms of tests to measure speaking skills. Teacher B added a speaking project with the use of digital tools. The students had to record videos while reading texts or scripts using Tik-Tok or Teleprompter. As informed by the teacher, students were eager to do the project-based test compared to face to face test. Project is an effective test to improve students' oral proficiency (Spring, 2020). Another test was conducted by teacher B as a remedy if the student's test scores cannot meet the standard criteria. Examples of remedies were students being assigned to introduce themselves or sing an English song. Singing English songs could help students in improving English pronunciation skills (Jackson, 2019; Khoiriyah *et al.*, 2018).

Students' speaking skills had been assessed through tests that reflect the communicative competence. However, the speaking skill test was only applied during teaching and learning activities or on an ongoing basis and was not applied at the end of the semester. The summative test was a multiple-choice test, which was designed by the English teacher through the MGMP forum in Kefamenanu. This test only measured two elements, namely language skills which include reading skills, and language competencies which include vocabulary and grammar. Speaking skills were not measured because of the challenges experienced by teachers when assessing speaking skills. Research conducted by Semiun and Luruk (2020) related to the English summative test proved that the English teachers who were the object of the research prepared a test that measures language skills such as reading skills, and language competencies such as vocabulary and grammar. The English summative test was a multiple choice test, and the English teachers did not provide another form

of test. Therefore, the summative test did not accommodate English speaking skills. The similar findings were yielded by Mahmud and Bostanci (2022), who reported that “the school leaving exams cannot be considered as a communicative test, as it does not contain most of the main characteristics and features of the communicative approach of language testing”. As quoted in Duque-Aguilar (2020), summative tests should be carefully considered because it can affect the grades of students. When the speaking skills were implied in formative and summative tests, it enabled to understand the content and subject properly (Alahmadi and Alshraideh, 2019). Qayoom *et al.*, (2021), asserted that the teaching and assessing of speaking skills were recommended to be implied in schools to improve the competence of active skills.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Speaking tests used by EFL teachers in two selected schools in Kefamenanu were oral presentations, free interviews, information transfer questions on a single picture, role play, imitative, conversation, translation, paraphrasing, and giving instruction and direction. The challenges faced by the teachers in assessing students’ speaking skills were insufficient time to prepare the test, the short time to test all students, and no test designing workshop/training provided for the teachers. In line with the conclusion of the research, teachers are advised to integrate the four skills in language learning into the summative test. All skills in language learning should be integrated into both formative and summative tests so that all indicators of learning achievement can be measured properly. This study only focused on speaking assessment techniques from the teachers’ perspectives. It is suggested for future researchers to interview the students to obtain a boarder picture regarding students’ perception on speaking tests. It is necessary to conduct similar research for other productive skills as well.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors acknowledge the parties that have contributed to the study such as LPPM of Timor University for funding this research in 2022, and the participants.

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